

already examined, but was deep and comfortably lined, appearing, however, from the outside as like a large Crow's nest as one bundle of sticks is like another. The eggs, four in number, were slightly incubated. In size, they seem to be intermediate between those of the Peregrine and Gyr-falcon, being, however, longer in proportion to their breadth. Two of them are light in colour, the other two much darker. One of the latter is accurately represented in the accompanying plate (Plate XII. fig. 1). It measures 2·2 in. by 1·6 in.

The male bird was well observed shortly afterwards. Sitting, utterly motionless, on the top of a dead tree, with his head turned over his shoulder, he seemed so mournfully conscious of the catastrophe which had befallen his family, that I felt utterly ashamed of having added murder to robbery in my desire to possess myself of an unknown bird. If the gun had still been in my hand I could have shot him easily, as he then seemed indifferent to his fate, but it so happened that he flew away before that weapon actually arrived, and thus escaped being involved in the ruin of his household.

This was the only pair of *Falco sacer* ever seen by me or by any of my friends in this part of the country. I am therefore induced to believe that the species is rare even here, though the bare and treeless chalk downs of the Dobrudska afford innumerable Bustards, both great and small, if that be the food they covet.

The second figure of the accompanying Plate, which has been prepared by Mr. W. C. Hewitson, represents the larger of the two eggs of Bonelli's Eagle (*Aquila bonellii*), concerning the taking of which I have already given full details in the last number of 'The Ibis' (see *anteà*, p. 291 *et seq.*).

XLVIII.—*Further Observations on some of the Birds of Western Greece.* By W. H. SIMPSON, M.A., F.Z.S., &c.

AMONGST the lesser birds of prey which frequent the neighbourhood of Mesolonghi and the lower parts of Western Greece generally, *Circus æruginosus* and *Circus cyaneus* are very conspicuous, especially in winter. *C. æruginosus* breeds in the great reed-fen,

which forms an almost impassable barrier both to the sportsman and naturalist below the fountain issuing from the base of Aracynthus, in the vicinity of the salt-works. It would be difficult to go out anywhere on the level grounds of this region, or on the still more extensive plains of Northern Elis across the gulf, without seeing several Harriers skimming the lagoons and swamps and marshy fields, ready to snap up an unwary bird. They may be considered an especial feature ever present in the landscape of the snipe-shooter, often tempting him to waste a shot upon their worthless carcasses, and, above all, recalling to his mind the traditions he may have heard from the older race of fen-men of those halcyon days when Ramsey Mere, Ugg Mere, and Whittlesca Mere were in their glory,—days when the Bittern was yet booming in the reeds at home, and when the early collectors could gather a capful of Harrier's eggs as a May-morning's work.

C. cineraceus was not observed here; it is considered to be a rare bird in Greece. With regard to *C. pallidus*, which the German naturalists at Athens consider to be of such frequent occurrence, I cannot say that any specimens fell under my notice: during the winter certainly none. One or two small birds, which seemed to be of a lighter colour than usual, were shot, but they turned out in every case to be specimens of *C. cyaneus*. There are male specimens of *C. pallidus* in the museum at Athens, from the neighbourhood of that city. It is therefore probable that the Pallid Harrier may occur more frequently on the eastern side of the Hellenic peninsula, which differs considerably in its ornithological character from the western side. Nor is this to be wondered at, when we take into consideration the very great difference in climate and vegetation which distinguishes the two regions—a difference not to be found within an equal space in any part of Europe. *Vultur cinereus* affords another instance of this. It is not unfrequently obtained in Attica, where possibly it may breed; whilst in Southern Ætolia, where *V. fulvus* abounds, and *V. percnopterus* in spring and summer is not uncommon, no single instance of its occurrence ever came under my notice, or of that of any one on whose testimony reliance could be placed. If there is any record of a Black Vul-

ture having been seen in these parts, it has been most probably an immature specimen of *Gypaëtus barbatus*: the difference in shape might not be observed at a distance.

The Kites are remarkable chiefly for their absence. Of *Milvus regalis* I noticed a single specimen, apparently on passage, near Angelo Castro, towards the end of February; but never one of *M. ater*. This is the more surprising, as the latter species is of frequent occurrence in Turkey, especially on the Bosphorus, where it is the hawk most commonly seen in spring and summer, ever sailing in groups of three and four over the ships in the harbour of Constantinople. Indeed, a rookery of them (if such a term be applicable) is reported to exist in some of the trees of the old town. Another raptorial bird remarkable for its scarceness is *Circaëtus gallicus*. It is said by Von der Mühle to be extremely common during summer in Greece, *i. e.* in Eastern Greece, with which he was best acquainted. This is perhaps the most reptile-eating of all the birds of prey. Its place is supplied by the Spotted Eagle, so numerous in this district. The only *Circaëtus* I ever saw in Western Greece was in the lower valley of the Alpheus. Not far from the same spot, and hard by the ruins of Olympia, I also came across the only colony of *Falco vespertinus* seen during our tour. There were four pairs, very tame, and evidently quite at home in the park-like trees with which that beautiful valley abounds. Diligent search was made for their nests (this was before the middle of May); but the natives assured us that, although the birds spent the whole winter and spring there, they never bred, and that those which we then saw would go away directly.

Towards the middle of March the Little Kestrel (*Falco cenchris*) begins to arrive, and presently takes up its abode, often in considerable numbers, in the villages and ruins upon the plains. Whilst the Common Kestrel, which occurs all the year round, dwells in the rocks and remoter ruins, breeding generally in single pairs, this species prefers more inhabited places, and, like the Swallow, trusts to mankind. In Eastern Greece, one of its favourite localities is the renowned ruin which crowns the Acropolis Rock at Athens. There, in company with the "Bird of Minerva" (*Athene noctua*), it finds a secure retreat in the remains

of Minerva's noblest fane, and in the rocks and crannies of that most ancient wall, in which so many nations have had a hand, from the days of the Pelasgi to those of the Venetians and the Turks. The traveller, after he has paid his devotions to the Parthenon and Erechtheum, and after he has feasted his eyes upon the magnificent panorama which that memorable spot commands, can hardly fail to notice with admiration the evolutions of these elegant little Hawks, which are hovering above him and below him in every direction. Most of the villages in the marshy plain near Mesolonghi have their colony of *F. cenchris*, and notably those in the neighbourhood of the Phidaris, where the insects abound on which they feed. Each of the favoured villages will have from half a dozen to a dozen pair. They breed generally under the tiles of a house, sometimes in a position where it is no easy matter to introduce the hand. There is no regular nest, but the eggs (four, and rarely five, is the complement) are placed in a depression upon the bare wall amongst bits of lime mixed with the hard parts of coleopterous insects. Incubation commences about the middle of May; and if the eggs are removed they speedily lay again, the second time mostly three eggs. In size, the egg is considerably smaller than that of the Common Kestrel; but it appears subject to pretty much the same varieties of colour, being on the whole perhaps somewhat lighter.

This species is very partial and gregarious in its breeding. Late in May 1859 we found four or five nests in one group of farm-buildings at Voukhorì. Near the same place there is a ruined stone tower,—a remnant of the very few habitations of the Turkish period which have survived the sweeping devastation of the war of independence. It was burnt about thirty-five years ago, and is now a mere shell: bits of the blackened beams still stick out of its tottering walls, partially preserving the windowless apertures which were intended to admit air and light when the building possessed a roof. An ugly dangerous old edifice it is,—not time-worn and venerable, but looking like a half-picked skeleton reared up on end, whose collapse may occur at any moment. This is the abode of the largest colony of the Little Kestrel which we ever found breeding together. Though so near the

village, they are not much disturbed: the only creatures that share with them possession of the ruin are one or two Little Owls, and a pair of Storks, which have built a large nest on the top of the tallest chimney now left standing. In the course of a couple of days, by carefully watching the holes, we managed to secure seven or eight nests of the Little Kestrel, using for that purpose two rickety ladders which the village afforded. One nest only was impracticable, being placed just beneath a tottering beam covered with loose stones. This was during the last week of May 1859.

Besides the difficulties arising from the position of the Stork's nest, the inhabitants of Voukchori (much to their credit be it said) were very unwilling that we should damage their beloved λελέκι. In consequence of this the nest was examined in the morning before daylight, and found to contain nothing. Storks should have eggs by the end of April; therefore it is to be presumed that this pair was young, and had not yet succeeded in producing a family. This was the only inhabited nest in the district; it might be seen from a great distance crowning the top of its isolated chimney, thus affording to the stranger a landmark by which he could direct his homeward course. In the days of the Turks these birds were common enough, as they now are in most Turkish villages.

Another of the household birds of Greece, but one more universally distributed than *F. cenchris* through every town and village of the country, is the little κουκουβαῖα (*Athene noctua*), which here presents the variety to which the term *meridionalis* has been applied. However, let it be called what you please, it is the veritable "Bird of Minerva" of the old Greeks, and as such is entitled to the reverence due to the familiar of the Goddess of Wisdom. It frequents olive-groves, old houses, ruins, ancient walls, and modern churches. To the latter it seems especially attached, though hardly with a view to getting any of the sacred oil, like those "fowls of the devil," the Scops Eared Owl and Barn Owl, in Catholic Spain (Ibis, vol. ii. p. 134). The cry of the Little Owl is one of the familiar sounds of the early part of the night, and is considered to be of good omen, so that even the Greeks like it. The name in their language, when pronounced rapidly, is not a bad imitation of the plaintive note

which it utters. No other species of Owl is abundant in the district round Mesolonghi, though the southern variety of *Bubo maximus* breeds in the rocks of Aracynthus. The immense forests which clothe the ravines on the northern side of that mountain may contain several species, and possibly *Scops zorca*, in plenty.

Dismissing the Raptores, we will now consider a few of the more obvious of the Insectorial birds which frequent the low grounds on both sides of the Gulf of Patras. Besides the regular migrants, which, coming from Northern and Central Europe, hybernate in the plains of Ætolia and Acarnania, and the opposite shores of Northern Elis, there are large flocks of local migrants, coming from the high grounds or from the colder regions of Albania and Epirus, which spend the winter in these low and comparatively sheltered regions. First of all, in the immediate neighbourhood of Mesolonghi, immense quantities of Larks are to be seen. *Alauda calandra* is especially numerous. A sportsman of the true French school might here indulge in his favourite *chasse* to any extent. Numbers winter here, changing their quarters in the spring; though some remain to breed, their nests being discovered together with those of *A. brachydactyla*, whose eggs are very frequently brought in by the *gamins* of the place. *A. cristata* is sparingly but more universally distributed throughout the entire district, being often found during winter in small flocks with *A. arborea*, though not much on the Ætolian side. *A. arvensis*, too, is common enough in the winter, but disappears from the neighbourhood of Mesolonghi as spring approaches. Next in number, after the Larks, come the Finches. The Goldfinch, Linnet, and Greenfinch (*F. carduelis*, *cannabina*, and *chloris*) are to be found in great quantities: many other Finches are doubtless mixed with them; but these three species, either singly or together, form the bulk of the flocks which are always to be met with in the low grounds and at the base of the mountains. The Common Starling, too, collects in immense flocks just as at home, and breaks down the reeds as it formerly did in the fens of Huntingdonshire. Here no one takes the trouble to scare them, and yet they always seem a long time in making up their minds where they will ultimately take up their quarters for the night. One of the favoured places was in

the reed-fen adjoining the lake of Pera Metokhi in Northern Elis. This fen, with the adjacent lake, is flanked on one side by part of a great oak-forest, and on the other by a forest of immense pines (*Pinus maritima*), which cover the plain to the base of the peninsular group of rocks terminating in Cape Papa. Often of an evening, coming home from woodcock-shooting, when the last rays of the sun were crimsoning the snows of Oionos and the sharp ridge of the more distant and loftier Kiona, have I noticed with admiration the evolutions of a flock of several thousands of these birds hovering over this reed-fen. No drill-sergeant could impart such unity of action to a given number of volunteers as was displayed by this body of Starlings. Seen from a distance in the uncertain light of evening, it seemed in shape like a comet moving across the pale blue sky. Suddenly another evolution is performed, and the apparent comet is resolved into its component units. Again the mass contracts, and a balloon seems to be floating over the reeds, which now lengthens out into a huge serpent gliding through the air. The hum of many wings is concentrated into a sound not unlike that of distant thunder, overpowering for awhile the cries of the wild-fowl and the as yet feeble croakings of the frogs.

Crossing over the gulf once more to our old neighbourhood at Ætolico, I may mention that a considerable flock of *Corvus collaris** passed the winter of 1860 in company with an equally large flock of Rooks at the foot of Mount Aracynthus. The Rook is only a hybernant in Greece, rarely if ever staying to breed there, but some of the Jackdaws do remain behind. Those at Ætolico during the month of February had the neck and shoulder of a very light grey; white it could scarcely be called. By far the greater part of them go away in the spring to breed—into Albania and the North most likely: yet I was assured by my servant, a trustworthy man, that the Jackdaws in Corfu and Albania have the grey ring much fainter than these have, and that in summer it is very slight indeed, probably nothing more than the faint grey ring observable in all the Jack-

* See Proc. Zool. Soc. 1846, p. 43, and Capt. H. M. Drummond's "List of Birds observed to winter in Macedonia," Ann. Nat. Hist. xviii. p. 11.—ED.

daws of Central Europe. All the evidence seems to point to the fact that these Ætolian Jackdaws of February are the same birds which breed during spring in Albania (see 'Ibis,' vol. ii. p. 135), and it seems clear that the Albanian Jackdaw of spring and summer is like the form prevalent in Central Europe. Whence then this great change? On the other hand, those birds which remained in Southern Ætolia to breed, retained during spring (of the summer I cannot speak) the whitish neck and shoulder, as also did all the Jackdaws that came under my notice in Asia Minor and Turkey during the spring of 1860. At Ephesus, amongst other places, there was a large colony breeding in April. During the latter part of the same month, in the very different region and under the very different climate of the Dobrudska, though on pretty nearly the same meridian, *C. collaris* was found breeding, to the entire exclusion of the Central-European form. These facts would point to its being an Eastern variety; and if one may hazard a conjecture on such slender evidence, we can suppose the majority of the Jackdaws hybernating in Western Greece to exhibit during a certain portion of the year those peculiarities, which, in some of their brethren that remain to breed, and in nearly all—if not all—the Jackdaws further eastward, have already passed into a permanent variety. It should be mentioned, however, that during the month of May 1859 there was noticed near Cape Papa in Elis a small colony, of which no one bird could be detected as differing from the common *C. monedula* of the rest of Europe.

Now that we are on the north side of the gulf, and once more at the foot of Aracynthus, it will be worth while to ascend the mountain a short way, either up the Grand Gorge, or, better still, up the Little Klissoura, to observe a few more of the very singular nests of *Sitta syriaca* and *Hirundo rufula*. Scrambling up the dry watercourse at the bottom of the Little Klissoura, we may notice in several places the nests of the former plastered to the face of the cliff. Most of these are old, and probably all but one or two inaccessible without a rope. Where the nest does not include a natural cavity of the rock, it is glued very tightly to the face of the latter, being fully exposed without any attempt at concealment, though very difficult to distinguish

from the numerous ants' nests, to which in outward appearance it bears a strong resemblance. It has generally a southern aspect. The outside appears to be stuck over with the wings of insects worked up along with the mud composing it, which becomes very hard after exposure. *Hirundo rufula* is still more singular in its nidification, always fixing its nest under a cave or projecting slab of rock. In the Little Klissoura and throughout the precipices of Aracynthus there are plenty of these caves, in former times a convenient refuge for the Klephts, as they now are for the shepherds tending their flocks during the winter months. This eccentric Swallow, not satisfied with having a good dry cave all to himself, must needs construct a long passage to his nest, thus giving it the shape of a retort with the upper part cut away, and the remaining portion glued underneath a flat surface. The entrance is narrow, but the passage gradually widens, till it finally opens into a sort of chamber very warmly lined with feathers: here the little fellow and his mate are sure to be most snugly tucked in just after sundown, when they can't see to catch any more insects. Escape therefore is impossible when a ruthless ornithologist wishes to capture the pair for the sake of identifying their eggs. No more than one pair ever seem to occupy a cave, though the remains of previous nests could occasionally be traced on the roofs. The same pair appear to return year after year, and their nest, unless injured by shepherd boys during the winter, will merely require a little touching up to render it again inhabitable. The fact of the same birds returning was proved by these caves being untenanted, where the pair had been captured during the preceding year. Several nests with eggs were found towards the end of May and beginning of June 1859. Four seems about the complement: they are quite white, much resembling eggs of *H. urbica*, which could be well passed off for them in collections.

A curious circumstance in connexion with one of these nests occurred to Dr. Krüper and myself in a cave at the entrance to the Little Klissoura. Fastened to the roof of this cave (which was on the face of a low cliff, and not easy of access) we espied a very good nest of *Hirundo rufula*, upon which Dr. Krüper proceeded to operate with a penknife, whilst I placed my hand over

the mouth of the passage. Presently something that felt cold, like a dog's nose, began rubbing against the palm. On withdrawing the hand a thick snake poked his head out of the aperture, looked around for awhile, and then popped in again. He was in very good quarters, and evidently intended to take a lease of the premises, which just suited him, as he could coil himself up in the bulb of the retort, with his head and neck stretched out along the passage in readiness for any emergency. We soon had him sprawling upon the floor of the cave, when it became apparent that he had swallowed a full-grown young Swallow, the other three being in all probability destined for a similar fate. The sensations of these wretched little victims, lying in such close contact with their horrible enemy, must have been somewhat akin to those of Ulysses and his companions in the cave of Polyphemus. In the destruction of the nest, two of them made good their escape; the fourth was captured and preserved by Krüper, together with the first, which, on being cut out of the body of the snake, was found to be very little injured as a specimen. The walls of the cave were smooth and nearly perpendicular, the roof at least seven feet above the floor, and no cracks visible; how then could this monster have wriggled himself into such a well-stocked larder?

Every European species of *Hirundo* and *Cypselus* (except perhaps *H. riparia*) may be found breeding in Mount Aracynthus. *Cypselus melba* (πετροχελιδόνα) comes in April, and establishes considerable colonies both here and in Varassovo: its nests lie deep in the clefts of high precipices, and are very difficult of access. *Cypselus apus* is not so common. *Hirundo urbica* (χελιδόνα) has several large colonies in the Klissouras and in the Grand Gorge: its round nests thickly dotting the face of the cliff are very conspicuous; the birds may be seen flocking in and out of them like a swarm of bees. In the mountain, *Hirundo rustica* is not so common as the latter: there is a variety frequent about Mesolonghi, which at one time was raised to the dignity of a separate species. *Hirundo rupestris* (ἀγρία χελιδόνα) is the only Swallow that winters in Greece. Numbers of them passed the month of February in the cliffs above the lagoon at Ætolico, where the nest of Bonelli's Eagle was found. During the sum-

mer they go higher up. One or two pairs were breeding towards the beginning of June in a deep cleft near the fort at the north entrance of the Great Klissoura, but their position was inaccessible.

The Game Birds of this district are few in species and decreasing in numbers. First of all comes the Greek Partridge (*Caccabis saxatilis*), which still maintains its ground in Aracynthus, though the natives are on the look-out for it all the year round. With this species incubation commences about the middle of April. It lays from ten to fourteen eggs, in colour much resembling those of the common Grey Partridge (*Perdix cinereus*); but in some a faint trace of freckles may be observed, thus connecting them with the profusely freckled eggs of the common Redleg (*Caccabis rubra*) and Barbary Partridge (*C. petrosa*). In all the mountains of Greece, *C. saxatilis* is more or less numerous, but, owing to the nature of the ground, does not afford good sport in its usual haunts. During the autumn, when the coveys descend to the islands, Meganisi for example, and in very hard weather, to the low grounds generally, a fair bag of them is sometimes made. The Pheasant, which used to be so numerous in the park-like woods that skirt the base of the mountains around the magnificent plain of Agrinion, must, I fear, be numbered with the things that have been. The Germans who came with king Otho are accused of being the first to commence the extermination of this bird; but now that the Greeks have left off shooting one another, they have taken to field sports instead. Nothing gratifies the pot-hunting propensities of an Ætolian shepherd more than stalking a hen pheasant on her nest—a sitting shot of course. Heaven be praised! they cannot shoot flying yet: when that accomplishment is learnt, adieu to the woodcocks. But it is obvious that as population and civilization increase in any district, all conspicuous birds that do not migrate to more secluded breeding-quarters must cease to exist. Anything like abstaining from shooting during the breeding season is almost too much to expect from a people who have recently made so great a sacrifice as to forego their hereditary privilege of shooting each other. The Bustard (*Otis tarda*) and Little Bustard (*Otis tetrax*), which are not uncommon in East-

ern Greece, occur but rarely in the neighbourhood of Mesolonghi. The Quail (*ὀρτίκι*) is tolerably plentiful at times, and many winter here. In December there is often very fair Quail-shooting; but the great spring migration, which covers some of the Ionian Islands with Quail towards the end of April, is but slightly felt on this part of the mainland.

Before quitting the region included between the Acheloiüs and the Phidaris, it only remains to take a 'monoxylon' and have a sail upon the broad lagoon of Mesolonghi, not forgetting to examine its muddy shores and numerous islets, which are the breeding-grounds of some of the many varieties of birds which we see resting upon or hovering over its surface. As there is a great change between summer and winter in its occupants, a separate expedition for each season will display great variety in the ornithological features of the scene. We will suppose the first to embrace the greater part of the latter half of May, when the majority of the birds that intend to breed here have already prepared their nests, whilst those whose breeding-grounds are further north are resting on the way from their southern quarters. Beginning with the Waders, we are sure to notice abundance of *Aegialites cantianus*, which breeds plentifully on the mud flats and islets. Its congener, *A. minor*, is not uncommon amongst the immense gravel-beds of the Acheloiüs and Phidaris, on one of which I once picked up part of an egg-shell, evidently of this species. *Glareola pratincola* is distributed everywhere, and breeds in company with the Terns. A few pairs of the Stilt (*Himantopus rufipes*) may also be seen flitting about: their breeding-place is close to the edge of the rough fen near Ætolico. On the 15th, a Plover, flying rapidly towards the east, was brought down by a quick shot, and turned out to be *Squatarola helvetica*, still in the winter dress. November and May are the months when this bird may be looked for in the marshes of Greece. Of *Totanus calidris* a very few pairs remain to breed: one nest only was brought in. During winter it is so common, that if you land on an island to get a shot at a snipe or a duck, one of these birds is sure to rise up and go shrieking across the water, to the great disgust of the gunner, as it puts the ducks on the alert. Hence its name of *μάρτυρος*, or the "Tell-tale."

If I remember rightly, the Scandinavian name of "*Tolk*," applied to this bird, attests a similar appreciation of its evil qualities. Some individuals of *Totanus ochropus* remain so late, that their breeding-quarters may be nearer than is generally supposed. We can believe almost anything of a bird that so far departs from the habits of its congeners, as occasionally to lay its eggs in old nests of tree-building birds*. *Tringoides hypoleucus* was not observed on the lagoon, but there is little doubt of its breeding amongst the pebble beds of the large rivers. On the 21st I was very much surprised to notice, at the mouth of the town-ditch of Mesolonghi, a large flock of *Tringa subarquata*. The following day they were again seen at the edge of the lagoon to the eastward of the town, where there is a good deal of rubbish occasionally thrown out, amongst which they seemed to be eagerly picking. About half of the flock were beginning to show the red breast and body, and some were in almost full nuptial plumage. What a long journey had these little fellows before them, for whom, in search of a breeding-ground, the extreme Cape of Siberia is not far enough north! [I think it is Middendorf who says this.] Small flocks of *Tringa temminckii* may be seen about the same time, or even later. *Numenius tenuirostris* would seem to breed somewhere in the neighbourhood, though no one, as far as I know, has ever had the luck to find its nests.

Ibis falcinellus occurs in flocks of moderate size. During the spring I have seen several together so late as the 15th, apparently on passage. It is not very probable that any breed in this district, though a few most likely remain behind in Epirus and Albania. The main body are merely *en route* for the marshes of the Danube and its affluents, where great quantities of them annually rear their young. The same remarks will apply to *Ardea purpurea*, *garzetta*, and *comata*, all of which species I have noticed in the marshes of Northern Elis, just across the gulf, so late as the middle of May. If any of them do breed here during the month of June, they are so well concealed in the reed thickets as to escape observation. *Ardea cinerea* would seem to remain here all the year round. *Ardea minuta* is

* Dr. Krüper has found eggs of this species so placed in Pomerania.

frequent in spring, and most likely breeds in the neighbourhood.

Though parts of the lagoon are covered with Ducks during winter, it is almost deserted by them in the month of May. *Anas boschas*, however, breeds on the islands; we found several of their nests, some with eggs, others hatched off or taken. No duck in Europe (let the high plateaux of North Africa be included) has such an extensive breeding-range as the common Wild Duck. The oologist in search of identified ducks' eggs, those most valuable desiderata of authentic cabinets, is sure to come across more of these than of any other species. Even in Lapland, the chosen breeding-ground of Wigcon, Teal, Golden Eye, Crested Duck, and a host of others, a stray nest of *A. boschas* is sometimes found, whilst in Greece it is the only duck that breeds at all plentifully. *Anas querquedula* breeds, according to report, in the marsh at Thermopylæ, and perhaps here also; nor is it improbable that a few pairs of *Fuligula nyroca* remain behind for the same purpose.

The most numerous of all the birds during the latter half of May on the lagoon of Mesolonghi are the Terns, and notably *Sternæ hirundo*, *minuta*, and *anglica*. If unmolested, their numbers would be enormous, as there are probably few places in the Mediterranean more adapted by nature for these birds, if innumerable flat islets and sandy spots, washed by an immense extent of very shallow salt water abounding in fish, can be any inducement to their undertaking the labours of incubation. But now that the towns of Mesolonghi and Ætolico are beginning to stir, and the fisheries to be more looked after, all the birds will suffer from the increase of activity. The eggs of *Sterna anglica* especially are much eaten by the natives. It was from this circumstance that I came to discover their principal colony, as the following extract from my note-book will show:—“On the 23rd I started in a monoxylon with Vitalis and a native to search the salt lagoon and the islets south-east of the town, my chief object being to discover the quarters of *Sterna anglica*, which was to be seen flying about in every direction. This bird had caused me many a fruitless ride across the high plains of the Atlas during the summer of 1857; and it now seemed likely

that I was to have another wild-geese chase across the lagoon and mud-flats of Mesolonghi under the equally powerful sun of Greece. Already several days had elapsed since we first noticed them, and still we were unable to gain any satisfactory tidings of their mysterious retreat. My associates became very mutinous in consequence of our prolonged ill-success; so I directed the boat to be landed at a fisherman's hut outside the main group of islets, where some fish was roasted to appease their hunger and ill-temper. Whilst this was being prepared, the usual question of course was put, and elicited the usual reply in the negative. 'Where do these broken shells come from, then?' 'Oh! they come from a long way off; and the birds won't lay any more.' 'Wouldn't 20 *lefte* per egg induce the birds to alter their determination?' 'They couldn't lay upon trust; part of the money must be paid down.' So the fisherman's boy agreed to try; and our monoxylon set off towards the outer spit, which was searched without success. On returning to the islet, I was much surprised at seeing a straw hat filled with eggs of *S. anglica* awaiting our inspection. Late as it was, I made the boy take me to the place, where I had the satisfaction of seeing the bird itself in great numbers, and succeeded myself in finding four nests, two of which, with their full complement of eggs, were taken then and there. The boy was directed to find all the nests he could, and leave them for me to inspect on the following day." The greater number of the nests were on two of the innermost islets of this group. Generally they are placed on the raised outer edge, which in case of a flood would remain longest high and dry. The eggs are deposited upon the sand or soil, in a depression slightly lined with a few bits of dead grass, and are not easy to see, as the colours blend with surrounding objects. The birds appear to commence incubation simultaneously, or nearly so, as most of the nests contained eggs pretty fresh. They did not evince the anxiety which many Terns do about their eggs, but simply contented themselves with flying in a body, at a great height, over the islands. I strongly suspect that in these hot countries the Terns do not care to sit upon their eggs throughout the day; and this may be the reason why one often sees flocks of *Sterna anglica* feeding miles away from head-quarters.

Mingling with the grand army of *Sterna anglica* are a few individuals of *Sterna hirundo*, which breeds sporadically over the entire lagoon: the chief colonies of *Sterna minuta* are in another direction. These three Terns are all that breed here, as far as I can tell. A few individuals of *Sterna leucoptera* and some flocks of *Sterna nigra* were observed so late as the middle of May, but they all seemed bound for the north.

Before taking leave of the lagoon in its summer aspect, there is one more bird well worthy of our attention, though it may seem somewhat out of place at the end of the list. Let the egg-seeker land on any islet, mud-bank, or sandy spit not destitute of vegetation, and who so ready to herald his approach, watch his proceedings, and chirp defiance at him from the top of a hillock, as the vivacious, brilliant *Motacilla melanocephala*? His mate has long ago quitted her nest, and presently makes her appearance in quite another direction, with that demure look which hen birds are apt to assume when they wish to look as if they didn't come from anywhere in particular. This bird is one of the especial features of Mesolonghi, where it is exceedingly numerous, and the only Wagtail seen during the summer-time. Besides the great contrast between the black head and the grey one, and the superior brilliancy of the yellow of this bird, together with the minor distinctions which may be observed on comparing skins of it with those of *M. flava*, there does not appear to be any difference in their respective habits, though much in their distribution. *M. flava* is an early spring migrant here, even wintering, according to Von der Mühle, in the extreme south of the Morea: the flight is generally over before *M. melanocephala* makes its appearance, which latter comes about the same time as *Merops apiaster*. The same authority also says that "one never meets with *M. flava* and *M. melanocephala* together;" that "in many districts, such as Livadia, Volo, and Lamia, only *M. flava* is met with, whilst in the Morea it is only *M. melanocephala*." This, I presume, is meant to be during the breeding-season. If his observations are correct as to the east coast of Continental Greece, it would appear that *M. melanocephala* does not go very far north on the side of the Ægean, whilst on the west side of the Hellenic peninsula Mr. Powys (*Ibis*, vol. ii. p. 229) noticed

the species, though in small numbers, near Butrinto in Epirus, which is pretty nearly as far north as it seems to have been observed.

Visiting the same lagoon in the month of February, a great change will be perceived in its ornithological aspect, not less than in the surrounding landscape. Instead of the gorgeous *M. melanocephala* in pairs, we have small flocks of *M. boarula* and *M. alba*. Not a single individual of *Sterna anglica* (as far as my observation goes) is to be seen, though *S. hirundo* maintains its ground. Instead of *S. anglica*, a few *S. cantiaea* and many *S. caspia* are flying over its waters, which are now well stocked with Ducks, though not so fully as a month ago. “Πιλῆθος, πιλῆθος,” said a Mesolonghiote, in answer to our inquiries touching the Ducks when first we came; but many have gone over since then to the Patras market. Of the true Ducks, *Anates penelope*, *boschas*, and *crecca* are the most numerous; *A. querquedula* not scarce; *A. acuta* very rare; *A. strepera* not seen at all. *Rhynchospis clypeata* tolerably numerous. The genus *Oidemia* not represented. *Fuligula cristata* and *F. ferina* extremely numerous; *F. nyroca* and *Clangula glaucion* less so. The last four species keep to the open water more than the true Ducks, which latter lie up amongst the reeds and sedge near the springs. *F. marila* and *F. rufina* not observed. *Mergus albellus* is said to be very plentiful at times; but not many were seen during the winter of 1860.

As this short account of the Birds of Western Greece is not intended to contain an exhaustive list of the species that occur there, but simply to point out a few of its most obvious ornithological features, there is no need to go through the shore birds and other Waders which frequent its lakes and swamps during the winter season. We may be sure that, in a country with so large an extent of sea-coast, and where draining is at present so little practised, the genera *Charadrius*, *Totanus*, *Tringa*, *Scolopax*, and *Numenius* are well represented. There is only one other bird (a most conspicuous feature in the lagoon of Mesolonghi) to which I would direct attention, and the more so as it is likely soon to disappear from the district, because it is too good a fisherman to be allowed a cast without paying any rent.

Time was, and not so long ago, when *Pelecanus crispus* lived in hundreds all the year round, from the rocky promontory of Kourtzolari, hard by the mouth of the Acheloiüs, on the western extremity of the lagoon, to the islands of Ætolico, up its northern arms, and, on the east, to the great mud-flats which mark the limits of the present delta of the Phidaris. Now-a-days a solitary individual may be seen fishing here and there throughout the lagoon, but the small remnant of this once mighty host have made their last stand upon the islands which divide the Gulf of Procopanisto from the Gulf of Ætolico. Here, towards the end of February last, the community of Pelicans constructed a group of seven nests,—a sad falling-off from the year 1858, when thirty-five nests, the remains of which had not then disappeared, were grouped in contiguous proximity upon a neighbouring islet. It needs not the nose of a pointer to discover the locality, even if the large white birds themselves were not a sufficient guide. As we approached the spot in a boat the Pelicans left their nests, and taking to the water, sailed away like a fleet of stately ships, leaving their newly-built establishment in possession of the invader. The boat grounded in 2 or 3 feet of mud, and when the party had floundered through this, the seven nests were discovered to be empty. A fisherman had plundered them that morning, taking from each nest one egg, all of which we of course recovered. The nests were constructed in a great measure of the old reed palings used by the natives for enclosing the fish, though with these were mixed such pieces of the vegetation of the islet as were suitable for the purpose. The seven nests were contiguous, and disposed in the shape of an irregular cross,—the navel of the cross, which was the tallest nest, being about 30 inches high, the two next in line on each side being about 2 feet high, the two nests forming each arm of the cross a few inches lower, and the two extremes at either end being about 14 inches from the ground. These latter, it is presumed, were intended for the junior partners of the firm, in the same way that the great bear of nursery tales has a big seat, his wife a middling seat, and the little bear a small seat. The eggs are chalky, like those of the *Pelecanidae* generally, very rough in texture, and some of them much streaked with blood.